of all States/UTs was held on 18.8.2004 to discuss, *inter alia*, the issue of MRP of medicines. However, as the States did not generally agree to the proposal of either exempting medicines from sales tax or reducing sale tax on medicines to uniform level, no final solution could be found on this issue in the meeting.

Package for FACT, Kerala

208. SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that a package was admitted by the Central Government and State Government of Kerala for reviving the FACT;

(b) the extent to which the package has been implemented, so far, by the Central Government and the State Government;

(c) whether concessions promised by Government of Kerala was implemented fully; and

(d) the steps proposed to be intiated by Government to sustain the FACT in the public sector?

THE MINISTER OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) to (d) The third and long term package for revival of FACT keeping in view its request for writing off the outstanding Government loan of Rs. 609.26 crores as on 31.3.2004 has been initiated by the Government of India. The Union Government has also pursued with the Government of Kerala certain concessions for reduction of State levies/taxes sought by the FACT which would improve its financial conditions. The officials of the Ministry met with the Senior Officers of the Government of Kerala including the Chief Minister of Kerala recently to expedite the concessions.

Irrational combinations

209. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI: Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of various irrational combinations being sold;

(b) if so, the details of their status; and

(c) the action being taken by DCGI to ban these irrational combinations?

THE MINISTER OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) to (c) The drug formulations marketed in the country and reported irrational in the present context of knowledge are examined by the Drugs Technical Advisory Board (a Statutory Committee under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940), through an Expert Committee and in consultation with medical Experts on a continuous basis. The drug formulations found harmful or irrational are prohibited by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare through a Gazette Notification. So far, the Government has banned 75 drugs/drug formulations for manufacture and sale in the country. All such banned drugs are uniformly withdrawn throughout the country.

Monitoring of prices of essential and life saving drugs

210. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the prices of some essential and life saving drugs have gone up creating a lot of inconvenience to the general public;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether there is any Government agency in place to monitor the prices of drugs from time to time and if so, steps taken by it to control and contain the prices of essential drugs; and

(d) the role of NPPA in this context?

THE MINISTER OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) to (d) The Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 1995 (DPCO' 95) does not make any distinction between Life Saving drugs and other drugs. In accordance with the provisions of the said Order, the Government fixes prices of the drugs listed in its First Schedule and formulations based thereon. In case, there is any violation of the approved/notified price of a Scheduled formulation, action is taken under the provisions of the DPCO '95.